

***Allowable Subject Matter***

Claims 2 to 23 are allowed.

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: A steel alloy characterized by a defined composition, a hardness >56 HRC and a value  $PRE > 25$ , wherein  $PRE = \%Cr + 3.3 \times \%Mo + 16 \times Ni$  as recited in claims 2 to 23 of present application is not taught or fairly suggested by the prior art, Japanese patent 2001-49399 alone or in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,714,114, for the reasons stated by the Board of Appeals' Decision dated October 17, 2011. The Board concluded that the prior art fails to recognize Applicants' discovery that a specific combination of Cr, Mo and N corresponding to PRE value provides pitting corrosion resistance without the need for a Cu concentration of at least 0.1% thereby avoiding deterioration in hot working properties of the claimed alloy by keeping the Cu concentration below 0.1%.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Deborah Yee whose telephone number is (571)272-1253. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday: 6:00am to 2:30 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Roy King can be reached on 571-272-1244. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Deborah Yee/  
Primary Examiner  
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